

Sergeant of the Guard!

This activity can be timed to fit specifically within a lesson block, but will have a greater impact if done on an ongoing basis throughout the day.

Background	<p>Each day, the parole and countersign (passwords) at Fort Stanwix were changed in order to prevent the spread of the words beyond the garrison. Usually the words used has an easy-to-remember correlation, such as “Gansevoort/Albany*”, so the soldier’s wouldn’t find themselves locked in the guardhouse for having bad memorization skills.</p> <p>If someone came to the fort and did not know the countersign, that sentry would call out for the Sergeant of the Guard to take that person to the guardhouse for questioning to determine if that person had good enough reason to stay.</p>
Additional Information	<p><i>*Colonel Peter Gansevoort was commander of the 3rd NY Regiment that the students will be portraying during the Soldier’s Day Program. The Gansevoort family was from Albany, NY, which the soldiers in the regiment knew, so it was very easy for them to recall.</i></p> <p><i>Sometimes the soldiers could receive a subtle reminder (cleanliness/health), or word of good news (America/victory) through the use of passwords.</i></p>
Activity	<p>Choose a parole and a countersign with your class. Using the background information as a guide, choose from the example situations (i.e. good news) to create a set of passwords that is specific to your class. Then, post guards!</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A desk can be moved close to the classroom door as the “sentry post” so the students standing sentry can still take care of class work until someone comes to the door. Historically, guards stood sentry for 2 hours, and then had 4 hours off for a period of 24 hours. You, however, can choose a rotation that you feel comfortable with. 2. When someone comes to the classroom door, the sentry on duty challenges that person with the parole (1st word). The person at the door then responds with the countersign (2nd word). In this case, the only people that should have a proper response are your students and any of your classroom staff. You can handle “trespassers” in a couple of ways:
Time and Space Option	<p>If you have time and space, set aside a section of the room to be a “guardhouse”. When someone comes to the door, the sentry challenges the visitor with the parole (1st word). If the person returns with the correct countersign (2nd word), then (s)he may enter the room. If not, the sentry calls for the Sergeant of the guard (teacher). The sergeant of the guard then takes that person to the “guardhouse” to question him/her about what business (s)he has in the room. The Sergeant then decides if the visitor’s business is worthy enough to continue on with, or if that the person needs to leave.</p>
Short on Time and Space Option	<p>If you are short on time and space, all of the business is attended to at the “main gate”(classroom door). When someone comes to the door, the sentry challenges the visitor with the parole (1st word). If the person returns with the correct countersign (2nd word), then (s)he may enter the room. If not, the sentry calls for the Sergeant of the Guard (teacher). The Sergeant then goes to the “main gate” to question the visitor about his/her business, and proceeds from there.</p>